

The narrative



Jacques Epangué English 101, 9M2 Professor Rolando Jorif Spring 2013 The Narrative In "About Men", by Gretel Ehrlich, the author describes cowboys like men who seem to have trouble communicating with and relating to women, yet cling to an "adolescent dependency" on women to take care of them. This trouble of communication with women can be perceived by others as a sign of weakness even a lack of virility. However, according to Ehrlich it may be because of historical and geographical factors.

Cowboys who are mostly from the South kept that "chivalrousness and strict codes of honor" when they came to the Wyoming. This is why men would show a stand-offish and respectful attitude vis-a-vis the women. Also, due to the geographical vastness of the North, cowboys often work where there is no human beings or women. He is physically and socially isolated which "make emotional evolution seem impossible". Therefore, if it happened that he feels something for a woman, he would have trouble communicating because he is not used to the code of seduction that average people know.

And yet, "dancing wildly all night becomes a metaphor for the explosive emotions pent up inside, and when these are, on occasion, released, they're so battery-charged and potent that one caress of the face of one "I love you" will peel for a long while." The attempt of the author to explain why the American cowboy tends to be rather reserved when it comes to seduce a woman squares well with her painting of his personality.

Keep in mind that the purpose of her writing is to "reveal the complex nature of the American cowboy", so she tries to show how the stereotype of the cowboy does not reflect the reality. This man who is "usually thought of as a rugged and tough" individual, is not only full of manliness, but has his

own kind of femininity reflected in his altruism, but also in his relationship with women, characterized by what the author names " Those contradictions of the heart between respectability, logic and convention on the one hand, and impulse, passion, and intuition on the other".

In fact the author stands that cowboys are vulnerable too, and according to her and Ted Hoagland " No one is as fragile as a woman but no one is as fragile as a man. " The stereotype of the manly and macho cowboy is subject of uncertainty since we read Gretel Ehrlich. According to her, the image of American cowboy painted by media does not match the reality.

Based on her own experience in the Wyoming she describes the American cowboy as a man with a complex nature, a combination of masculinity and femininity. The American cowboy is certainly " strong and silent", or a " rugged individualist", but not in the perverted way the media tend to show us. And if he looks evasive with women it is not because he is tough, but because he is missing the code of seduction, " the vocabulary to express the complexity of what they feel. "